

**Town of Easton – Special Town Meeting**  
**MINUTES**

**September 13, 2021 – 7:00 p.m.**

**Samuel Staples Elementary School, 515 Morehouse Road, Easton**

**Present:**

David Bindelglass, First Selectman  
Kristi Sogofsky, Selectman

Robert Lessler, Selectman  
Christine Halloran, Town Clerk

**Attendees:**

Ed Nagy, Director, Public Works  
Saphora Lifrak, Representative of Ethics Ordinance Working Group  
About 75 members of the public

Registrars of Voters checked-in attendees with identification at entrance.

David Bindelglass convened the meeting at 7:10 p.m.

The Town Clerk read the call of the meeting.

The First Selectman asked for a motion to nominate a Moderator. Wendy Bowditch nominated Andrew Kachele. Jeffrey Parker seconded the motion. Gloria Bindelglass nominated Maureen Williams. Nanette Dewester seconded the motion. No further nominations. The First Selectman directed the Town Clerk to count the votes by raise of hands for each nominee [Kachele 25 votes and Williams 18 votes]. The nomination of Andrew Kachele was approved.

The moderator stated ground rules for the meeting and called for official comments for Agenda items.

**1. Shall the Town of Easton appropriate the sum of \$550,000.00 for the Partial Roof Replacement at 660 Morehouse Road?**

Vivian Hardison motioned to discuss. The motion was seconded. The Moderator called for official comments from the Director of Public Works, Ed Nagy who indicated that the roof needs to be replaced. The project is for \$550K project cost prior to reimbursement from insurance. The Moderator called for public comment. Several residents commented. Ed Nagy responded to comments and questions. The Moderator called for any other discussion. With no additional comments, the Moderator indicated that the item would go to a machine vote.

**2. Shall the Town of Easton appropriate the sum of \$80,000.00 for the costs associated with initial design of a multi-use/pedestrian path along Sport Hill Road?**

Anne Hughes motioned to discuss. The motion was seconded. The Moderator called for official

comments from the First Selectman, Dave Bindelglass who indicated that the appropriation was for project design costs with the option of three phases of funding. The preliminary \$80K was for initial design with the amount reimbursable at 80%.

Point of Order: Anne Munusky commented that she rescinded her motion to approve discussion of the item. The Moderator informed the resident that the motion was brought forth by Anne Hughes.

The Moderator called for public comment. Several residents commented. First Selectman Bindelglass and Chair of the Board of Finance, Andrew Kachele responded to comments and questions.

Point of Order: Maureen Williams asked that the Moderator enforce the mask mandate per C.G.C. 7.8. The Moderator restated the mask mandate for attendance at the Town Meeting.

The Moderator called for any other discussion. With no additional comments, the Moderator indicated that the item would go to a machine vote.

**3. Shall the Town of Easton adopt the new Land Use Ordinance?**

June Logie motioned to discuss. The motion was seconded. The Moderator called for official comments from the First Selectman, Dave Bindelglass who indicated that this proposed ordinance references how the Town will use land resources. Currently, the Board of Selectmen determine whether to buy, sell or lease town property. This ordinance allows the town to have ultimate control of purchase, sale and lease of town land per the specifications detailed in the ordinance. In the past, the idea is that previous proposals were too restrictive. Some provisions reference consultation with the Board of Finance. This ordinance codifies the process for significant pieces of land. The Moderator called for public comment. Several residents commented. Beverly Dacey requested an amendment to have the ordinance specifically address in writing that it was effective upon passage. Robert Lessler motioned to add to the ordinance "This Ordinance is to take effect upon passage and publication." The Moderator called for any other discussion. With no additional comments, the Moderator indicated that the item would go to a machine vote.

**4. Shall the Town of Easton adopt the new Tax-Exempt Handicap Vehicle Ordinance?**

Anne Hughes motioned to discuss. The motion was seconded. The Moderator called for official comments from First Selectman Bindelglass who indicated that many towns in the state exempt handicap vehicles from property taxes. It is reasonable, fair and right to do this for those with tremendous hardship. The Moderator called for public comment. A resident commented. The Moderator called for any other discussion. With no additional comments, the Moderator indicated that the item would go to a machine vote.

**5. Shall the Town of Easton adopt the revised Ethics Ordinance?**

Devon Wible motioned to discuss. The motion was seconded. The Moderator called for official comments from Selectman Robert Lessler. Mr. Lessler commented on the current ordinance and the new ordinance expansion. The current ordinance creates a five-member board on which members serve simultaneous two-year terms with a limit of six successive years. It makes no mention of penalties for violations of the ordinance. The new ordinance has an extensive definition of terms and separates detailed sections addressing conflicts of interest, gifts, disclosure of financial interests, employment of relatives and associates, revolving doors prohibition, discrimination and harassment, political activities, a requirement to acknowledge having read the ordinance, and extensive changes to the Board of Ethics and its powers. The new Board of Ethics will continue with five members serving two-year terms. However, the terms will not be staggered. Per Selectman Lessler, the revised ordinance expresses our commitment as a town to the concept that public service is a public trust and that is the essential to good government. The goal is not to discourage public service but rather to promote public confidence in our government.

First Selectman Bindelglass commented that this process of ordinance revision involved looking at twelve neighboring towns in Connecticut.

Saphora Lifrak presented official comments referencing her twenty-one years of experience and knowledge of ethics laws as well as the review of other jurisdictions. The proposed Easton ethics ordinance in its essence, requires that public officials work for the public good, rather than for their private purposes. It does so by strengthening the current Code as well as the powers of the Board of Ethics. Most important, the proposed Ordinance provides guidance for public servants, so that there is less confusion concerning what is or is not permissible. It removes, to the extent practicable, political affiliations from what should be non-partisan government service, and requires the Board of Ethics to create financial disclosure forms for public servants, which forms will be more or less detailed depending upon the public servant's duties and obligations to the public.

Per Mrs. Lifrak, the definitions section spells out — among many other things — that there is a duty to report ethical lapses, sets a floor for what constitutes a financial interest at \$10,000.00 and/or 20% ownership in an entity, sets the gift limit at anything with a fair market value of greater than \$15, and includes definitions for the following terms, which are not referenced in our existing ordinance: associated persons, impartiality and integrity, ministerial matters, and transactions.

Additional new provisions include examples of behavior that must be reported by public servants and things that are and are not impermissible gifts. It requires notices about the gift policy to be published on the town website. It has specific and clear rules concerning nepotism.

Residents asked questions and commented. Mrs. Lifrak responded to question and comments. The Moderator called for any other discussion. With no additional comments, the Moderator indicated that the item would go to a machine vote.

**6. Adjournment of the Town Meeting to a machine vote to be held on Tuesday, September 21, 2021, 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Samuel Staples Elementary.**

The Moderator called for a motion to adjourn. Anne Hughes motioned. The motion was seconded. The Moderator adjourned the Town Meeting to a machine vote to be held on Tuesday, September 21, 2021, 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Samuel Staples Elementary School to vote on each agenda item. No further discussion or public comment. The meeting adjourned at 10:02p.m.

Submitted by,  
Christine Halloran, CCTC, CMC  
Easton Town Clerk